



The President's Daily Brief

19 October 1973

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FOR THE PRESIDENT ONLY

THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

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PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Egyptians and Israelis were heavily engaged yesterday on both sides of the Suez Canal. A major battle is likely soon between the Israeli task force on the west bank and Egyptian units trying to neutralize it. (Page 1)

The USSR has 73 naval ships in the Mediterranean, an all-time high. Among them are eight amphibious landing ships, some of which are expected to return to the Black Sea within the next day or so. (Page 2)

Saudi Arabia, announcing yesterday that it will reduce oil production by 10 percent through November, made it clear that all customers will suffer except those countries following pro-Arab policies. Other Arab states will probably match or even exceed the Saudi cutback. The brunt of such reductions falls mostly on Western Europe and Japan. (Page 3)

In South Vietnam, the Communists are planning attacks in areas where government operations are encroaching on Communist-held territory. They will also make a priority effort to secure adequate supplies of rice from the autumn harvest. (Page 4)

With the dry season less than two months away, Cambodian insurgents are working out battle plans that concentrate on the Phnom Penh area. The strategy includes another round of large-scale attacks against the capital's southern defenses and interdiction of its main supply lines. (Page 5)

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Notes on China's foreign trade, Sino-Soviet relations, and the forthcoming talks on force reductions in Europe appear on Page 7.

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ARAB STATES - ISRAEL

There was heavy fighting yesterday on both sides of the Suez Canal. An important battle is likely soon between the Israeli task force on the west bank and Egyptian units trying to neutralize it.

Egypt has claimed publicly that it encircled the Israeli force and ordered it to surrender, but available evidence does not suggest the Israelis are in immediate danger. They were able to strengthen the task force yesterday, beating off heavy Egyptian counterattacks, and this morning Tel Aviv said it had 200 tanks west of the canal.

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Israeli planes flew many ground support missions in the area of the west bank bridgehead. They also continued to attack the Port Said area and some Egyptian airfields. Egyptian aircraft flew mostly defensive patrols, but also attacked the Israeli bridgehead.

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Except for artillery exchanges, there was little action on the Syrian front yesterday.

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The Israelis claim that fedayeen attacks from southern Lebanon have increased, and warn that retaliation will be severe.

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The Soviet airlift to the Middle East continues at the same high level of the past few days. The Middle East News Agency announced last night that President Sadat held three lengthy meetings with Premier Kosygin, who left Cairo early this morning for Moscow.

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USSR-MEDITERRANEAN

The deployment of four amphibious ships to the Mediterranean on October 17 raises the number of Soviet naval ships there to 73 units, an all-time high. Normally, the Soviet Mediterranean force numbers between 45 and 50.

The current force includes 27 surface combatants and 18 submarines, four of which carry cruise missiles. Among the surface combatants are eight amphibious landing craft, some of which are expected to return to the Black Sea within the next day or two. The other 28 are logistic support ships and intelligence collectors.

Before the Middle East fighting began, the Soviets had 14 major combatants in the Mediterranean. There are 17 there now, but two of the recent arrivals had been scheduled several months ago to visit Italy at this time, which they are now doing.

The war started during the semiannual Soviet submarine turnover. A relief group of nine submarines from the Northern Fleet entered the Mediterranean on October 4 and 5. Turnover usually takes about ten days, but thus far only three submarines are known to have left the Mediterranean.

The great bulk of the Soviet force is in the eastern Mediterranean.

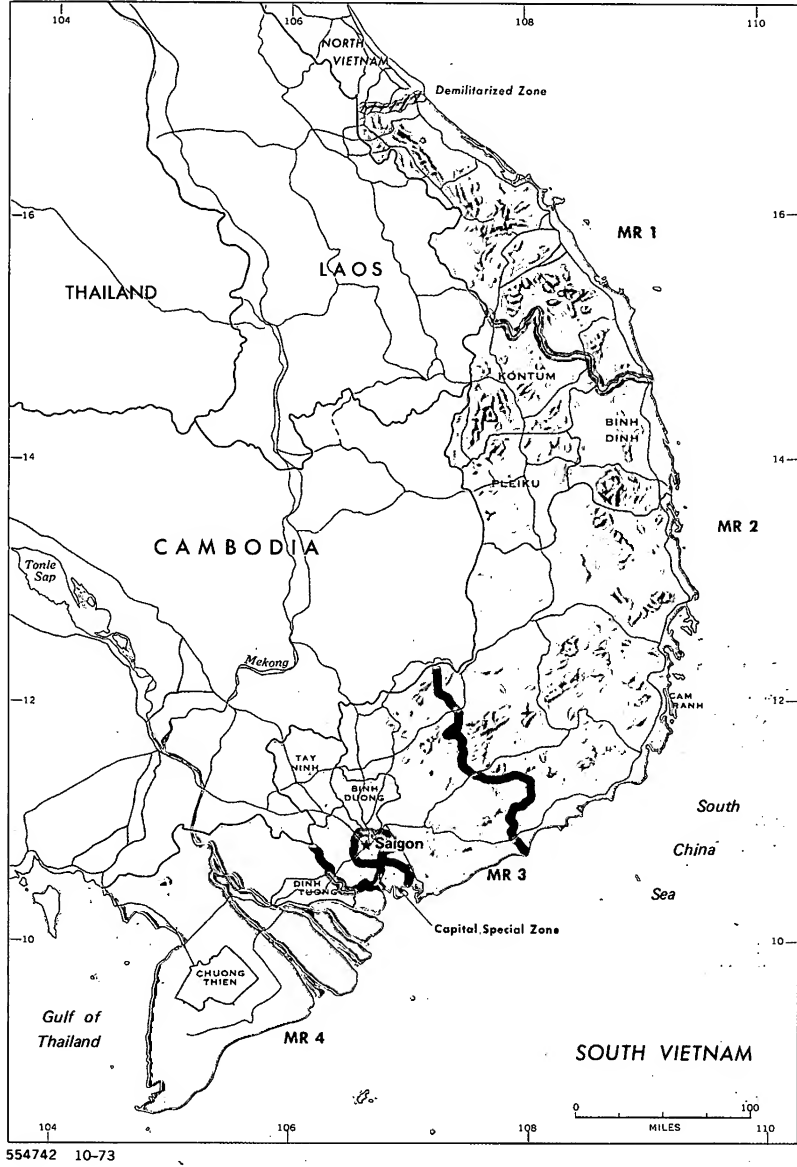
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SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia, announcing yesterday that it will reduce oil production by 10 percent through November, made it clear that all customers will suffer except those countries following active pro-Arab policies. The initial cutback will amount to about 850,000 barrels a day. The Saudis will put off deciding on any subsequent reductions until they have had time to gauge the effect of their actions on US policy.

Other Arab states, including Kuwait, Iraq, Algeria, and Libya, will probably match or exceed the 10-percent Saudi cut. The brunt of such reductions falls on Western Europe and Japan, which respectively get 70 and 40 percent of their oil from Arab sources. The Arabs have said they will maintain oil deliveries to "friendly" countries that give them "effective material help," but no major Western country--with the possible exception of France--seems to fall in this category.

Provinces Where Communist Military Activity Is Expected



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SOUTH VIETNAM

COSVN has instructed subordinate elements to carry out three key missions. [REDACTED]

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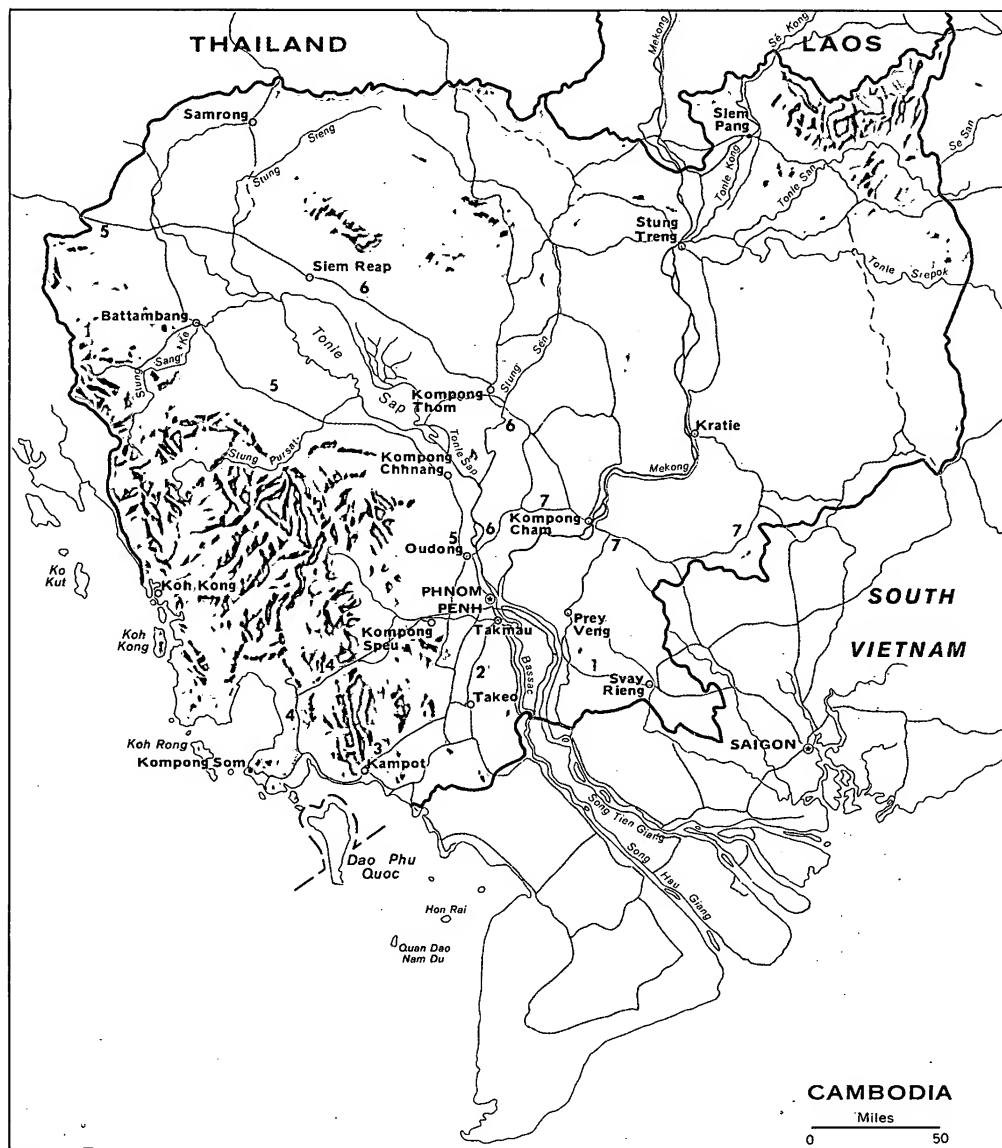
The first mission is to launch limited attacks in areas where government operations are encroaching on Communist territory. In this connection, [REDACTED] seven provinces in southern and central South Vietnam. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] are intended to force Saigon to implement the Paris Agreement more faithfully.

The second mission is to secure adequate supplies of rice from the autumn harvest, [REDACTED] a life-and-death matter for the future of the Communist struggle. The final mission is to consolidate troop and party strengths to pave the way for greater--unspecified--successes in 1974.

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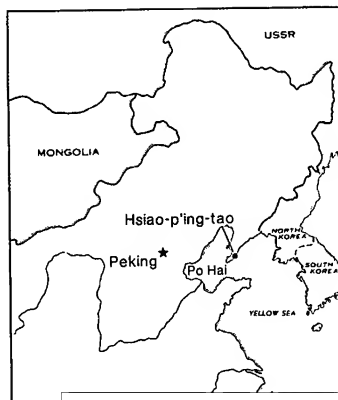
CAMBODIA

With the dry season less than two months away, the insurgents are working out battle plans that concentrate on the Phnom Penh area. Units in the provinces have received orders to send additional personnel to the capital area, where rebel commanders are replacing casualties and retraining their units. Intercepts show that the insurgents hope for a total strength near Phnom Penh greater than during their summer offensive, when 57 Communist battalions with an estimated 17,000 troops were within a 25-mile radius of the capital.

The strategy calls for another round of large-scale conventional attacks against Phnom Penh's southern defenses along Routes 2 and 3. Attacks against the city's northwestern defenses are also likely; some insurgent units have already moved back into this area. East of the capital, the rebels probably will try to move up to the banks of the Mekong River within artillery range of Phnom Penh.

The insurgents may attack the capital itself. One recent message ordered a rebel unit "to look for penetration routes" into the city. Another message disclosed that a sapper unit which raided one of Phnom Penh's main power plants in late September is now "studying" future operations.

The insurgents also will assign a high priority to choking off the capital's supply lines. A recent message stated that "cutting Routes 4 and 5, and the Mekong, now and during the forthcoming dry season, will have a very bad effect on the enemy's economic and military policies." Recognizing that the continued interdiction of Route 5 will be particularly important when the rice harvest begins in the northwest, the insurgents already are taking steps to strengthen their forces along the highway. Units along the Mekong corridor began rebuilding for the dry season some time ago and intercepted messages suggest that they will again try to interdict river traffic once the Mekong starts to recede.



Preparation for SLBM Testing

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CHINA

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NOTES

China: Peking's foreign trade, continuing its upward trend, reached a record level of \$5.8 billion in 1972--a 24-percent increase over the previous year. Furthermore, there was a favorable trade balance of \$280 million. This year--spurred by heavy imports of farm products, machinery, and transport equipment--trade is expected to reach about \$7.5 billion. More than three fourths of China's trade continues to be with non-Communist countries, led by Japan and Hong Kong. The US may displace Hong Kong in 1973.

USSR-China: Pravda's stinging indictment of Peking this week exemplifies the frigid state of Sino-Soviet relations. A lengthy editorial, pegged to the Chinese party congress two months ago, attacked Chinese policies across the board, but showed particular sensitivity to China's attempts to hamper Soviet efforts to improve relations with the West. Pravda holds out no hope for the Peking border talks, which are about to enter their fifth fruitless year. The chief Soviet negotiator has been in Moscow for the past three months, and there probably is little discussion in his absence.

NATO - Force Reductions: Although the allies have reached formal agreement on a common position for the force reduction talks opening in Vienna on October 30, the amount of disagreement on many of the major issues suggests that they will be hard-pressed to maintain unity, just as they were during the initial talks last spring. The paper setting out the goals, negotiating strategy, and procedures for the talks was approved only after weeks of haggling. Several serious disagreements, mainly raised by the British, have merely been papered over.

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